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ABSTRACT

Independent and affiliated models are two different types of administrative organization in college athletic departments. An independent athletic department is a conglomerate of smaller units, of varying size, which are in competition with each other for limited resources, institutional recognition, and public acclaim. The primary purpose of an independent athletic department is to satisfy many of the external demands, placed on an educational institution, which may or may not be compatible with the role and mission of the institution. An independent model features an athletic department that is definitely not an academic department, as there are no degree programs. When intercollegiate athletics is affiliated with an academic unit, several features become evident. Athletic personnel and programs report directly through normal academic channels regardless of whether departments, divisions, professional schools, or even colleges become involved. An affiliated model also features a system where evaluation and worth are determined by the quality of benefits and the total contribution made, and not just by numbers of benefits or numbers of dollars. Other topics discussed in this paper about independent and affiliated athletic departments include: (1) administrative responsibility; (2) expendable sports and programs; (3) philosophy and ethics; (4) faculty evaluation and tenure; (5) budget sources; and (6) academic majors and degree programs. (JMK)

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The Administrative Housing of Intercollegiate Athletics:
Independent or Affiliated with an Academic Department

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The Administrative Housing of Intercollegiate Athletics:

Independent or Affiliated with an Academic Department

The purpose here is to present two very general models, with their accompanying rationale, for the administrative housing and structuring of intercollegiate athletics. One model will be completely independent of any academic department or unit, while the other will feature a strong affiliation with a legitimate academic department or unit. The merits for each type of model are presented in the form of a firm and very positive advocacy, with very few arguments resembling pro and con, and totally without the characteristic over-exaggeration associated with debate.

Definition

Independent

An independent athletic department is a conglomerate of smaller units (teams) of varying size which are in competition with each other for limited resources, institutional recognition, and public acclaim. The primary purpose of an independent athletic department is to satisfy many of the external demands placed upon an educational institution, which may or may not be compatible with the role and mission of the institution.

An independent model features an athletic department that is definitely not an academic department. There are no degree programs, and varsity athletic participation, except as a free elective, does not carry credit toward any degree program, including coaching certification. In addition, the independent athletic department does not qualify as a support service, since it offers nothing to enhance the scholarly efforts of academic

departments.

The best definition of intercollegiate athletics seems to be that it is an entertainment enterprise conducted for the purpose of public relations. As such, the institution becomes willing to subsidize athletics for real and/or imagined benefits to the institution, its athletes and its students.

Since an independent athletic department represents a sizable investment and has extensive potential benefits it seems prudent that its administrative structure be as efficient and as effective as possible. Even cursory examination of administrative flow charts illustrate that placing athletics under another department compounds the bureaucratic structure, and that such a structure is not motivated by a desire for efficiency. One can only speculate at what provides the motivation for using such structures. Perhaps it is nothing more than tradition. Or, on closer examination it may be that chief administrators, because of the controversy that often surrounds college athletics, are reluctant to assume the direct control of collegiate athletic programs, and prefer the creation of a buffer.

Affiliated

When intercollegiate athletics is affiliated with an academic unit, several features became immediately evident. Athletic personnel and programs report directly through normal academic channels regardless of whether departments, divisions, professional schools, or even colleges, become involved. Under this model the athletic department will contain many coaches (sometimes all) who because of their academic affiliation, will be eligible

to attain academic rank and tenure, thereby becoming more acceptable to the academic community, and becoming more likely to make other academic contributions such as committee participation, faculty governance, academic advising, etc. These coaches will have advanced degrees (occasionally earned doctorates), academic interests, and supporting areas of expertise. Most of all, this type of arrangement will feature teacher/coaches that view intercollegiate athletics as an educational service for students and society and not a profit motive corporate business enterprise with economic growth as its top priority.

An affiliated model also features a system where evaluation and worth are determined by the quality of benefits and the total contribution made, and not just numbers of benefits or numbers of dollars. Some of the benefits are the improvement of the athletic programs for student/athletes, the promotion and development of educational leadership, physical fitness, recreational participation, and the pursuit of excellence. This situation is a sharp contrast to typical non-affiliated structures, where the best interests of student/athletes often lose top priority to the purpose of making money, or else losing less money, or the simple self-perpetuation of an athletic system.

Administrative Responsibility

Independent

Because of the dissimilarity of functions between athletic and other departments, the administrative responsibilities of the corresponding department heads are also quite dissimilar. An athletic director's responsibilities focus almost entirely on business concerns as opposed to academic deans or department chairs who direct most of their energies toward academic concerns. An academic

administrator is responsible for all facets of the learning situation. An athletic director is responsible for providing entertainment. The latter involves tasks that include event scheduling, guarantee negotiation, arranging travel schedules, meals and lodging, ticket sales and promotion, facility and contest management, the hiring of contest officials, assisting with media coverage, etc. Academic administrators seldom if ever become involved with such tasks and often fail to appreciate their importance, expense, or the amount of time needed to complete them.

Although these concerns are real, they might be considered minor at some institutions. Other differences often considered to be more serious are those administrative responsibilities having far greater potential to impact negatively if intercollegiate athletics is housed in an academic unit. These include type of employment contract, job description, tenure considerations, and hiring procedures that differ among teachers and coaches. Another source of conflict is the disparity between athletic and academic budgets. The athletic budget is generally much higher than the academic budget of the unit in which athletics might be housed. In other words, the budget responsibility of the athletic director is often greater than that of the academic administrator to which the athletic director reports. In addition, the athletic director is responsible for compliance with conference, district and national rules that can and do effect institutional policy. Consequently, it is in the best interest of the institution if the athletic director and chief administrative officer have a direct working relationship.

Finally, the structure of an athletic department compares to an academic division or school that features many smaller departments, units, or programs.

The athletic director has in fact a Dean's level responsibilities for a variety of departments and programs (sports). Therefore, an athletic director should receive the same job status as a Dean.

Affiliated

According to Etzioni (1964), the most important structural dilemma found in any organization is the inevitable strain imposed upon that organization through the use of knowledge. Intercollegiate athletics is no exception. Motivation in sports is often contrary to knowledge in the field. Goals in sports are often contrary to knowledge in the field. Furthermore, there is often pressure and evaluation from the least knowledgeable in our society.

The dilemma is best resolved, yet only partially resolved, through an organizational structure that places the most knowledgeable people in legitimate positions to make professional decisions, which is best accomplished through academic affiliation.

Expendable Sports and Programs

Independent

Under today's economy and with decline in student enrollment many institutions are faced with program elimination decisions and reductions in force. Under such conditions separation from academic departments seems most sensible. When intercollegiate athletics are an integral part of an academic department an unequalness of control exists. This is especially true if the academic department, particularly physical education, is affiliated with athletics when athletics is under control of an athletic policy board. In this situation, physical educators attached to athletics

lose control of their own academic programs. In addition, athletic coaches in physical education programs often have a voice in the conduct of those academic programs.

When facing expendable program decisions certain characteristics of intercollegiate athletics should be considered. First, athletic departments have greater control of expenses than do academic departments, consequently they may find alternatives that are more acceptable in meeting budget crises situations than simply eliminating programs. Secondly, athletes come from many different disciplines and if it becomes necessary to eliminate selected sports and programs the decision should not be the responsibility of just one academic department. A third consideration is that athletic participation is not generally dependent upon student enrollment, however, it is true that intercollegiate athletics contributes substantially to the total student enrollment.

Affiliated

Affiliation with an academic structure protects all sports and programs, which serves in the best interests of student/athletes, the American athletic system, and our educational process. Affiliation also eliminates the necessity of comparing and contrasting revenue spending vs. revenue producing sports, or spending less and becoming more cost efficient. Evaluation can be made on benefits to those who participate as well as spectators, and not just dollars. A pool of up-to-date coaches is created for teacher preparation classes for physical education majors and for activity services classes that function for the entire student body. Affiliation creates a situation where intercollegiate

athletics and teacher preparation can supplement one another instead of contaminating one another, and where the careful planning of job descriptions make expendable sports and programs too inexpensive to eliminate.

Philosophy and Ethics

Independent

Everyone and every group follows a standard of behavior, ethics, and philosophy. For cohesiveness of a group, it is important that its members adhere closely to the group's standards of behavior. Sport sociologists (Scott, 1973; Kew, 1978) have identified three such ethics in athletics, (1) the Lombardian Ethic which is often viewed as a "win at any cost attitude," (2) the Counter-culture Ethic which features a central theme of "it matters not who won or lost but how you played the game," and (3) the Radical Ethic which stresses "striving for excellence in performance."

While some individuals might be attempting to create a change, most educators embrace the Lombardian Ethic. It is simply too much a part of our culture. There is an abundance of visible evidence to support it as the dominant ethic in athletics.

The academic world professes to be different. Academically many educators seem to embrace the Radical Ethic. Professors strive for excellence in themselves and in their students, feeling that if excellence is achieved winning will not be a concern in itself but a natural outcome.

As a result of conflict of ethics a growing number of athletic directors and coaches are caught in a stressful dilemma with growing opposition from both sides. More and more they tend to blame the problems of athletics on the failure of college and university presidents to assume direct responsi-

bility for control of athletics. The best means of resolving this dilemma is to establish athletics as an independent unit not housed or affiliated with an academic department.

Affiliated

Academic affiliation enhances the chance that those charged with the responsibility of intercollegiate athletics will be of a common philosophy that contains certain characteristics. Athletics will remain the main place in an academic community where a complete commitment to the pursuit of excellence is not only expected and acceptable, but relentlessly promoted. Coaches will be allowed to teach the meaning of excellence and the implications of its pursuit, instead of excellence being defined only in terms of winning. Intercollegiate athletics will stress the value of the pursuit, instead of the notion that there can only be one winner. An affiliated athletic program will also be provided the protection and academic respectability necessary to fight off the inevitable dangers that surround the pursuit of excellence. Most importantly, student/athletes will be allowed to experience just how good they can be, while at the same time be provided with the opportunity to fail, without fear of retaliation from a system filled with hypocrisy.

Faculty Evaluation and Tenure

Independent

As a general rule coaching contracts do not contain a provision for tenure. Consequently it has been the practice to fire coaches on the basis of win-loss record. In such cases due process is rather abrupt. On the other hand, it is rather difficult to dismiss tenured faculty, or to deny tenure to probationary faculty. Due process for negative tenure decisions

of faculty can become quite lengthy. It seems extremely inconsistent to have both types of contracts in the same administrative unit, and foolish to expect a spirit of cooperation or cohesiveness to exist under such conditions.

One alternative is to grant coaches tenure. However, this can have a greater negative impact. If coaches by choice or by decree, leave coaching for the classroom, they generally create staffing problems. They are often not current or adequately prepared to meet the needs of an academic unit. In physical education, a faculty can quickly become overloaded with personnel who are not adequately prepared to teach in areas where they are most needed, such as in certain theory courses or scientific foundations. The other pressing problem is that hiring decisions are often based on coaching qualifications only, or specific athletic needs and not sound academic priorities. The result is that the quality of education suffers, which should be sufficient justification for a completely independent athletic department.

Affiliated

Affiliation with an academic department allows coaches to earn rank and tenure according to the quality and quantity of similar contributions that are normally expected of other members of the academic community, instead of rank and tenure being continually denied with win-loss records becoming the only real evaluation. Academic affiliation encourages acceptance from within the academic community and lessens the necessity of a coaching occupational subculture (Massengale, 1974), which creates dysfunction in higher education (Massengale, 1981).

Faculty coaching evaluation for merit salary enhancement, promotion in rank, or consideration of tenure, can be assessed by using many traditional factors. Among those are personal and professional attributes that influence coaching, administrative ability, theory and techniques used in coaching, quality and practice of recruiting, public relations skills, coaching effectiveness, professional recognition and growth, promotion and fund raising, and last but not least, depending on the teaching/coaching portion of the contract job description, an assessment of teaching effectiveness.

Budget Sources

Independent

At large institutions the major portion of the athletic budget is self generated. The administration of that budget and the efforts expended to generate those funds is best conducted by those closest to the situation. In the case of fund raising, the athletic director will minimize duplication of effort and conflict between athletic fund raising and other fund raising efforts at the institution.

In smaller institutions the major portion of the athletic budget often originates from the institution itself but generally not from the same budget category as academic budgets. Consequently it is questionable whether or not it is justifiable to link two such units together. Furthermore, in smaller institutions student services and athletic budgets generally arise from the same budget category, which might make athletics more appropriately aligned with student services rather than an academic department.

If it is necessary to have athletics aligned with another unit of the institution, placing them with student services would be more appropriate than with an academic department, however, it is plainly best to have athletics completely independent of other administrative units.

Affiliated

Athletic funding becomes more reasonable when evaluated and analyzed just like any other legitimate program that an educational institution sponsors, and then channeled through an administrative structure similar to other academic programs and functions of a university. Budget decisions should be made by professionals in the field and not by management personnel with a corporate, business, or solely profit motive perspective. Academic affiliation will maintain the students, the educational system, and our society as the beneficiaries of intercollegiate athletics. After all, beneficiaries of business or corporate concerns are expected to be their owners. One might ask who owns intercollegiate sports anyway? According to Blau and Scott (1962), to convert a university into a business concern that gives the consumers what they want does not serve in the best educational interests of the students. One might also ask if consumerism is the main purpose of intercollegiate sports?

Academic Majors and Degree Programs

Independent

There are significant differences between students and athletes that further supports an independent organization. In an academic unit the students are all pursuing degrees in the same general discipline which is their common bond. Athletes do not have a common bond other than their

specific sport and the institution itself. It is estimated that from institution to institution no academic unit enrolls more than 20 to 50 percent of the athletes. It seems strange then to thrust the remaining 50 to 80 percent into an academic unit simply for the sake of administrative convenience.

It should also be noted that students are buyers and athletes are sellers. Students are buying an education in the form of the collective talent and resources that an institution can provide. Athletes on the other hand are sellers of their talents for purposes of entertainment and public relations. As such they are contractual employees, and as athletes they should be treated as employees and not students.

Affiliated

Affiliation with an academic department, particularly a physical education department, supplements and enhances degree program training in many ways. It provides real working role models. A system of acceptable career sponsorship, career mobility, and working gatekeepers is established. A source of converting educational theory into practice is created.

Affiliated athletic departments provide a source of up-to-date knowledge. There can be a continual source of evidence that good teaching and good coaching are compatible, desirable, and fully attainable. There can also be a continual demonstration that physical education and coaching may be considered an art, a science, a craft, or maybe even a calling, and most of all a legitimate field of academic study.

Concluding StatementIndependent

Harper, Miller, Park, and Davis (1977) attempted to answer the question of what the relationship of physical education and athletics should be. By their own admission they did not find the answer but did succeed in showing why that relationship is a continuing problem. Their arguments follow a somewhat different rationale than has been raised here and thereby lend additional support to the idea that intercollegiate athletics should be administered separately from academic departments.

It is difficult to prioritize the points presented and indeed it may be possible that their relative importance may vary from institution to institution. However the differences in the purposes of academic and athletic departments, and their accompanying administrative responsibilities, certainly justify the total separation of intercollegiate athletics. If it is absolutely necessary to place an additional administrator between the athletic department and the President, the most logical choice would become a Vice-President or Dean of Student Services. In addition to the arguments presented, prominent leaders in intercollegiate athletics have been asking, begging, or demanding that college and university presidents assume more direct responsibility for athletics as a necessary step in curing athletic ills. The recommendation then is that athletics should be administered by a director that has a direct line and staff relationship with the President of the institution and that the athletic department be completely independent.

Affiliated

Administering intercollegiate athletics constitutes a special dilemma, a dilemma which is similar to what was best described years ago as "institutionalized role conflict" (Seaman, 1953). Etzioni (1964) has presented various solutions to this dilemma, but by far the most popular is the rule of the professionally oriented administrator. An administrator who combines a professional education, with managerial practice, experience, and personality.

Only through the credibility derived from legitimate academic department affiliation, with the department administered by a person with a strong professional perspective who has been given legitimate authority, can intercollegiate athletics be appropriately administered in the best interests of the university and its students. Independent athletic departments are far too easily controlled and managed by administrators in higher education, who are far too easily influenced by stereo-typical sports fan mentality, thereby allowing sports fans to administer intercollegiate athletics, which seems to be nearly as foolish as allowing political columnists to administer the State Department.

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